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18TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0518**

November 30, 2010

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The Honorable Ray LaHood  
Secretary of Transportation  
Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Mr. Joseph C. Szabo  
Administrator  
Federal Railroad Administration  
1120 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood and Administrator Szabo:

I am writing to you regarding the California High-Speed Rail Authority staff's recent recommendation to the Authority Board regarding the priority corridor for application of state and federal funds. I urge you to immediately intervene to enforce the Federal Rail Administration's (FRA) directive regarding the appropriate use of the \$715 million award of federal funds provided to the State of California.

The staff recommendation made on November 24, 2010, of the Corcoran-to-Borden section as the priority route for initial construction of the high-speed rail project is fundamentally flawed. When Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and when California voters approved Proposition 1A in 2008, they did not envision that the first segment of the state-of-the-art high-speed train would be built from Borden to Corcoran. Unfortunately, that is exactly what the California High-Speed Rail Authority's staff is proposing to do, causing many to dub the \$4.3 billion segment of the project as "The Train to Nowhere."

Starting construction of California's high-speed rail project in the Central Valley is good stewardship of taxpayer money because its topography and limited obstacles allow high-speed trains to reach 220 mph. However, it defies logic and common sense to have the train start and stop in remote areas that have no hope of attaining the ridership needed to justify the cost of the project. I supported FRA's funding to the Central Valley as a way to jump-start the high-speed rail project, to bring jobs to the Central Valley, and to connect the Central Valley to other urban areas of the state. Building the train from Corcoran to Borden might bring jobs to the region initially, but will do nothing to sustain job growth and long-term economic development because the trains simply will not be used. The Authority is promising to create more jobs in this first phase than there are people in these two small communities. The population of Corcoran and Borden combined is just 25,000.

The intent of Californians in passing Proposition 1A was to build the system as fast as possible, maximizing ridership and the mobility of Californians in a manner that yields the most benefit consistent with available revenues. The Merced-Fresno segment represents the backbone of this rail system, providing crucial links to Sacramento, the Bay Area, and Southern California. The

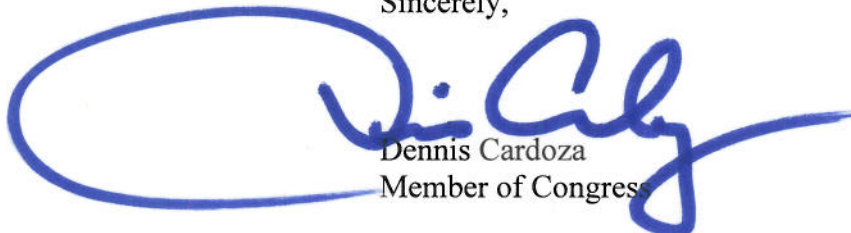
Merced-Fresno segment offers a line that is ready to go and will provide a functioning segment, connecting two stations and an operating line that has independent utility. In contrast, the Borden-Corcoran segment with a high-speed train (HST) station in the Kings/Tulare region near Hanford violates Proposition 1A because it cannot be considered a "useable segment" and it currently does not meet FRA's requirement of independent utility.

California's high-speed rail system is supposed to be world-class, but this recent staff recommendation of Borden-Corcoran simply doesn't measure up to either our expectations or the legal requirements of ARRA and Proposition 1A. In light of the serious questions raised with the failure of the Authority to meet ARRA and Proposition 1A requirements, I am requesting answers to the following questions:

- 1) The current Alternatives Analysis for the Fresno-Bakersfield Project EIR/EIS, the Final Program EIR/EIS for the Statewide system, and the "Final Program EIR/EIS Statewide System Map" do not include a HST station in the Kings/Tulare region near Hanford, or anywhere between Fresno and Bakersfield. Therefore, isn't it true that the failure to include the Kings/Tulare region as a preferred location for a HST station in any prior environmental study will require that the Authority reopen and amend the Program EIR/EIS for the Statewide system and revise the draft Project EIR/EIS for the Fresno-Bakersfield segment, causing a delay which will raise serious questions as to the Authority's ability to complete all environmental certifications by the ARRA deadline of September 2011?
- 2) Only a week before the December 2, 2010, Board meeting, the Authority is recommending the Board select one of four newly-developed sections that were never presented to FRA, the Board or the public, and are wholly inconsistent with the descriptions of the segments for which federal funding was granted by FRA. Therefore, isn't it true that the Authority's current recommendation for the use of federal funding blatantly ignores Administrator Szabo's direction of November 3, 2010, to apply the combined federal funding received by the agency to the "design and construction of one of the two Central Valley sections ... as described by" the Authority in its funding applications?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. As you are aware, the Authority is scheduled to act upon the staff recommendation at its upcoming meeting on December 2, 2010. We believe that candid answers to these questions will confirm that the staff recommendation is seriously flawed. If the Authority board accepts the staff recommendation at its meeting, then the Authority and FRA will remain accountable for such an erroneous decision.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Cardoza".

Dennis Cardoza  
Member of Congress